

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 6, 7, and 16 as follows. All claims in the application are being reproduced below for the Examiner's convenience.

1. (Currently Amended) An image heating apparatus comprising:
a flexible rotatable member contactable to a recording material carrying an image;
a back-up member disposed in said rotatable member;
a pressure roller for forming with said back-up member a nip ~~portion~~ with said rotatable member therebetween, ~~said the~~ nip being effective to feed the recording material, wherein said rotatable member is deformed to form the nip; and
a limiting member for limiting movement of said rotatable member in a direction of a generating line of said rotatable member,
wherein said limiting member is provided with a surface opposed to an outer peripheral surface of an end portion of said rotatable member, and
wherein ~~when the nip portion is formed, said rotatable member is flexed, and~~ the outer peripheral surface of said rotatable member includes a surface portion which is in contact to with the opposed surface of said limiting member and a surface portion which is out of contact ~~from with~~ the opposed surface of said limiting member by the deformation of said rotatable member, ~~when the nip portion is formed.~~

2. (Previously Cancelled)

3. (Previously Cancelled)

4. (Previously Cancelled)

5. (Previously Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said limiting member rotates with said rotatable member by friction at the surface portion which is in contact to the opposed surface of said limiting member.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 2 1, wherein when said rotatable member and said pressure roller are spaced from each other, a diameter of said rotatable member to of a surface the opposed to the peripheral surface of said limiting member in a state that said rotatable member is free of deformation is larger than a diameter of said rotatable member to of the other peripheral surface of said rotatable member.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein in a state that the nip is formed, and said rotatable member is deformed, a gap δt between the outer peripheral surface of said rotatable member and the opposed surface of said limiting member and a difference a between the gap δt and the diameter of the opposed surface of said limiting member an outer diameter a of said rotatable member, and a difference δt between a diameter of a surface of said limiting member opposed to the peripheral surface of said limiting member and a diameter of the peripheral surface of said rotatable member; satisfy the formula wherein 0.009 is equal to or smaller than $\delta t/a$ which is equal to or smaller than 0.03 .

8. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein δt is 0.3 mm-1.0 mm.

9. (Previously Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said limiting member further includes a second surface for receiving an end surface of said rotatable member, and an angle formed between the surface opposed to the outer peripheral surface and the second surface is larger than 90 degrees.

10. (Previously Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a holder for rotatably holding said limiting member.

11. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 10, wherein said holder is effective to limit movement of said limiting member in the direction of the generating line.

12. (Previously Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 10, further comprising a guiding member for guiding said rotatable member inside said rotatable member, wherein said holder is directly or indirectly fixed to said guiding member.

13. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said limiting member is made of heat-resistive resin material.

14. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said rotatable member has a metal layer.

15. (Original) An apparatus according to Claim 14, further comprising a coil for generating a magnetic field for inducing eddy currents in said metal layer, wherein the image on the recording material is heated by heat from said metal layer in which heat is produced by the eddy currents.

16. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said back-up member includes a heater contacted to an inner peripheral surface of said rotatable member, and wherein ~~and~~ the image on the recording material is heated by heat from said heater through said rotatable member.

Please add Claims 17-22 as follows.

--17. (New) An image heating apparatus comprising:

a flexible rotatable member contactable to a recording material carrying an image;

a back-up member disposed in said rotatable member;

a pressure roller for forming with said back-up member a nip portion with said rotatable member therebetween, the nip portion being effective to feed the recording material, wherein said rotatable member is deformed to form the nip portion; and

a ring-like member in contact with an outer peripheral surface of an end portion of said rotatable member,

wherein the outer peripheral surface of an end portion of said rotatable member includes an area which is in contact with said ring-like member and an area which is out of contact with said ring-like member.

18. (New) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein said ring-like member is rotationally driven by said rotatable member through friction at a contact area therebetween.

19. (New) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein said ring-like member has an inner diameter which is larger than a diameter of the outer peripheral surface of said rotatable member.

20. (New) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein said rotatable member has a metal layer.

21. (New) An apparatus according to Claim 20, further comprising of coil for generating a magnetic field for inducing eddy currents in said metal layer, wherein the image on the recording material is heated by heat from said metal layer in which heat is produced by the eddy currents.

22. (New) An apparatus according to Claim 17, wherein said back-up member includes a heater contacted to an inner peripheral surface of said rotatable member, and wherein the image on the recording material is heated by heat from said heater through said rotatable member.--

REMARKS

There are now pending in this application Claims 1 and 5-22, of which Claims 1 and 17 are independent. Claims 17-22 are newly-added. No claims have been cancelled.

Favorable consideration and early passage to issue of the above application are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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